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Identical letters dated 31 August 2013 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey to you the following:

I have the honour to write to you at this critical and pivotal juncture in the history of my country, Syria, which is experiencing a severe crisis that is having a profound effect on the Syrian State as a whole and all of the Syrian people. At the same time, alarming statements are being made regarding ongoing preparations for a military aggression against Syria on the basis of groundless excuses, the most recent of which was the claim that chemical weapons have been used. In that connection, I should like to convey to you the following:

Beginning more than a year ago and on more than one occasion, the Syrian Government has warned of the serious dangers that could result from the possibility that armed terrorist groups might use chemical weapons in Syria. It has also conveyed information regarding the activities of those groups in formal letters to both the Secretary-General and the Security Council. Meanwhile, certain States that are directly responsible for the bloodshed in Syria and for preventing a peaceful solution have been leading a political, diplomatic and media campaign aimed at drawing attention to the matter of the so-called use of chemical weapons in Syria and holding the Syrian Government responsible for the use of any chemical substances. This is being done in preparation for the future use of this pretext against Syria.

The Syrian Government once again affirms that it has never used chemical weapons. It was, rather, the Syrian Government that requested the Secretary-General to form an objective scientific team to investigate the use of chemical weapons in the town of Khan Asal on 19 March 2013.

After the crime of the use of poisonous chemical gases was committed in Rif Dimashq on 21 August 2013, Syria's enemies capped their campaign of aggression by accusing the Syrian Government of committing this crime. Although the Syrian Government allowed the United Nations investigative team to visit the sites at which poisonous chemical gases were used, those States pre-empted the findings of the team's investigation and accused the Syrian Government of using chemical weapons in Rif Dimashq in order to justify committing the military aggression against Syria for which they have been planning.

After days of media propaganda and fear-mongering, the United States Secretary of State, John Kerry, said the American administration has what it called

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confidential, irrefutable evidence, which it would later share with its people and the world, in order to justify launching its military aggression. This statement came despite the calls made by the international community and the United Nations to abide by the provisions of Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law and to await the results of the investigation being conducted by the United Nations team, which is being led by professor Åke Sellström. Mr. Kerry relied on old stories that the terrorists have circulating for more than a week and that are full of fabrications, lies and deceptions. The information and numbers that Mr. Kerry proffered are utterly false. They are being bandied about by armed groups in Syria and certain elements of the foreign-based opposition that are agitating for American aggression against Syria. Diplomatic history is perhaps repeating itself in a tragic and regrettable theatrical scene that reminds the world of the false claims that Secretary of State Colin Powell made before the Security Council in order to justify his country's invasion of Iraq. What is puzzling is that, in their respective stories concerning Iraq in 2003 and Syria in 2013, both Secretaries Powell and Kerry used the same intelligence term to falsely sway American and international public opinion. The precise term that both Secretaries used is "high confidence".

With regard to Mr. Kerry's statements, we would like to make clear the following:

1. It is in the national interest of the Syrian State, Government and people to uncover the truth regarding claims that chemical weapons were used in Syria. In keeping with that national interest, the Syrian Government concluded an agreement with the United Nations to investigate three sites, among which is Khan Asal. It then allowed the investigative mission to visit the areas of Rif Dimashq that are the subject of the new allegations. I should like to inform you that, on 28 August 2013, the Syrian Government sent a new request to the Secretary-General calling on him to investigate three incidents that occurred in Rif Dimashq in which Syrian army troops inhaled poisonous gases.

2. The party that is now dispatching fleets and mobilizing troops and readying its rockets in preparation for attacking Syria is the very same one that opposed the adoption of a draft resolution that Syria put before the Security Council on 29 December 2003, at which time it was a Council member, aimed at ridding the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction. It is also the same party that, at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, blocked the resolution calling for the convening in 2012 of a conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, in order to ensure that Israel would not have to comply with the requirements of such a conference.

3. The Syrian Government has challenged the American administration to produce a single piece of credible evidence to support claims that it has used chemical weapons. Mr. Kerry, however, publicly stated that his country was relying on "high confidence" information on the basis of false pictures taken from the Internet. As for the claim that a Syrian officer had made contact after the alleged attack, it is not worthy of the great intelligence-gathering capacity that a country such as the United States of America is supposed to possess.

4. The United Nations Secretariat has repeatedly stated that the traces of the use of poisonous gases do not dissipate with time. The accuracy of that is evidenced by the fact that it dispatched a team to investigate the Khan Asal incident five months

after the Syrian Government had requested that it should do so. Despite that, the Syrian Government did not delay in allowing the investigative team to enter the area in which the alleged attack took place. In fact, this occurred within 48 hours of the arrival in Damascus of the United Nations envoy, Angela Kane, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

5. Mr. Kerry has stated that the investigative team is not responsible for identifying the party that used chemical weapons and that its task is solely to determine whether such weapons were used. The purpose of that statement is to justify the American administration's circumvention of the Security Council. It should be recalled that, in its letter to the Secretary-General of 20 March 2013, the Syrian Government officially requested that the investigation should determine who it was that used chemical weapons in Khan Asal. That request, however, was rejected at the time by the delegations of the United States of America, Britain and France.

The world was expecting the United States to fulfil its role in the maintenance of international peace and security, and to work in partnership with the Russian Federation to make earnest preparations for the convening of the second Geneva conference. It was not expecting it to act as a State that uses military power against those who oppose its policies. Everyone was also anticipating that the United States would play a positive role in the effort to arrive at a peaceful, political solution to the crisis in Syria, under Syrian leadership. Many States believed that the United States would not make the same mistakes it had made in justifying its aggressions against Iraq, Libya and other countries. On the other hand, the Syrian Government officially and publicly stated its readiness to participate, without prior conditions, in a second Geneva conference. The position of Syria is in keeping with the openness with which the Syrian Government has responded to all sincere international and regional initiatives to resolve the Syrian crisis. Clearly, any party that is striving for a peaceful resolution to the situation in Syria would not need to publicly state its intention to provide the armed opposition with sophisticated weapons, with a view to changing the military balance on the ground. It should instead have a sincere desire to strive for the successful conclusion of the comprehensive national dialogue without prior conditions, and to use diplomacy to resolve this crisis.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic places great emphasis on ensuring the safety of the people of Syria and protecting its sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity, and defending it against aggression. This is a right that is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic calls on the Secretary-General to shoulder his responsibility to uphold the principles of the Charter, exercise his good offices in order to prevent any aggression against Syria and push forward efforts aimed at arriving at a peaceful, political solution to the Syrian crisis. The Syrian Government further calls on the Security Council to hold fast to its mandate and maintain its role as a safety valve, the purpose of which is to prevent the arbitrary use of force outside the context of the United Nations.

I should be grateful if the present letter could circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Permanent Representative
of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations